

# CHANDELEUR ISLAND HISTORY

**CHANDELEUR  
LIGHTHOUSE**



**ESSENTIAL HABITAT**



The Chandeleur Islands Chain is a part of the Breton Islands National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), located in the Northern Gulf of Mexico 25 miles south of Biloxi, Mississippi and 75 miles east of New Orleans. The Breton Islands NWR was established in 1904 by President Theodore Roosevelt and is the second-oldest NWR in the NWR system. The island chain was also designated part of the National Wilderness System in 1975.



**THEODORE ROOSEVELT**

## CHANDELEUR ISLAND HISTORY

Historically, it has been home to several man-made structures, all of which have been destroyed over the years by hurricanes. Of all the islands in the chain, Chandeleur Island is by far the largest, at nearly 14 miles in length. The Chandeleur Island chain was formed over 2,000 years ago. The chain was given its name by the French explorer Pierre LeMoyne d'Iberville in 1700 as he sailed along the Gulf Coast.

Over the years since, the island has been home to fishing settlements, farming, and even a lighthouse that was built in 1895. Hurricanes Georges, Dennis and Katrina heavily impacted the islands.

Although the island chain has recovered from the effects of those storms and many other storms that have followed, it continues to fragment and shrink in size. Additionally, with current rates of relative sea level rise and other factors, it is thought that the islands could be completely lost within a few decades. The disappearance of the islands would mean the loss of thousands of acres of habitat that are critical to the survival of many species of terrestrial, avian, and aquatic animals. As the island erodes, the habitat conditions of the marine seagrasses is compromised, and those too begin to disappear. The loss of the island and its seagrasses will imperil 76 "species of greatest conservation need" in Louisiana. Seven of these are federally threatened or endangered.

The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster introduced millions of barrels of raw crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico and the barrier islands along its coast. This oil directly impacted the Chandeleur Island chain and the various wildlife that it supports. Restoration of Chandeleur Islands' terrestrial and aquatic habitats is a vital step in the recovery of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem overall.



**CHANDELEUR BEACH**



**CHANDELEUR MARSH**